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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 GEORGETOWN 000288

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

CA/VO FOR JUNE KUNSMAN
CA/FPP FOR LARA HARRIS
GUATEMALA FOR JOLEEN SCHWEITZER
BOGOTA FOR RMO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [SMIG](#) [KCRM](#) [KFRD](#) [GY](#)

SUBJECT: Civil Document Vulnerability Compromises Visa Security -
Action request

Ref: Nesbitt/Tuller and Kunsman/Tuller Conversations 6 Mar 2007

This cable contains an action request. See paras 9 and 10.

Summary

¶1. (U) Georgetown continues to wrestle with excessive fraud in all aspects of consular services. Longstanding issues such as sham marriages and engagements, corruption in the issuance of passports and civil documents, as well as more recent concerns involving fraud in HIV testing, complicate adjudication of visa and passport applications. New revelations about civil document issuance in Guyana and possible vulnerabilities in U.S.-based DNA testing give Post further cause for concern that petitions may inadvertently be approved and visas issued to persons who do not have the claimed qualifying relationship to the petitioner. Post is now requiring chain of custody documents for DNA testing and is increasing the evidence of relationship required to prove a blood relationship. Post requests CA declare Guyanese civil documents unreliable and consult with the AABB on accreditation standards for parentage testing facilities.

Civil Documents in Guyana

¶2. (U) Guyana still uses a paper-based civil registry system, recording births, deaths and marriages in large ledgers that are stored haphazardly at the main office in the capital city. The process has many vulnerabilities: clerks are paid about US\$100 per month, making them highly susceptible to bribes; the paper stock for civil documents has no security features and the paper, color, and format vary dramatically as the GOG bids out the contract each time more paper is required; access is not controlled to the dry seal.

¶3. (SBU) In mid-2004, the GOG changed the design of the dry seal die. At that time, due to concerns that the former version of the die had been competently forged by document vendors, Post began requesting newly-issued birth certificates as ConOffs believed the new seal had not yet been comprised. In the first year and a half that the new seal was in use, Post was detecting 5-10 fraudulent civil documents per week. However, for the past eight months or so, Post has only detected a handful of fraudulent documents. Post recently learned that the new 2004 die was made locally by a trophy store in Georgetown. Copies of the 2004 dry seal die are likely in the hands of the several well-established alien smuggling rings headquartered here that move Guyanese as well as Chinese and South

Asia migrants to the United States and Canada. This would account for the greatly reduced numbers of fraudulent Guyanese civil documents Post is detecting.

Vulnerabilities in DNA testing

¶4. (U) Although Post recommends DNA testing in many immigrant visa applications, ConOffs are concerned about the integrity of the DNA process. Specifically, some AABB-accredited labs mail the petitioner's test kit to their residence and/or allow the petitioner to get their sample drawn at any facility of their choosing. A number of AABB-accredited labs do not send the chain of custody documents with the DNA results, making it impossible to verify where the sample was drawn and what identity documents were presented.

¶5. (U) Post recently surveyed the 43 AABB-accredited parentage testing facilities listed on the AABB website. Consular staff were unable to contact 15 of the clinics, which appear to be out of business. Another facility no longer provides parentage testing services. A consular associate contacted the remaining 27 facilities, identifying herself as an employee of the US Embassy in Georgetown, and asked about the facility's procedures for collecting samples. Of the 27 facilities that Consular staff were able to contact, only one requires the petitioner to go to the facility to have the sample drawn. Several other facilities have contracts with lab that cover most of the US and petitioners must go to one of these labs for the sample draw. The majority of facilities, however, stated that they would send the sample collection kit to any physician, doctor, or "neutral" third-party lab to have the samples taken. Several facilities stated that they tried to keep this option as a last resort. When asked what that meant, several labs stated that if the client lived more than thirty minutes from the facility

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or if they preferred to have their family doctor take the samples, they would send the kit there. Several facilities also stated that they would send the kit to the client who could then have the samples taken by any physician. Post got the impression that while the facilities understand the chain of custody requirement, most do not realize that clients undergoing parentage testing for immigration purposes may have personal reasons to manipulate the results.

¶6. (U) The majority of the US-based Guyanese population resides in New York and NJ. The only AABB-accredited parentage testing facility in the NY/NJ area requires petitioners to come to their facility for the sample draw. Post has begun to see an increasing amount of NY and NJ-based petitioners using other facilities, however, in Washington, Ohio, Texas and elsewhere that do not have this requirement and do not forward chain of custody documents. While petitioners can, of course, select any AABB-accredited facility, the fact that an increasing number of petitioners are choosing facilities that are not near their place of residence and that have questionable chain of custody requirements is a concern.

Post response

¶7. (U) Consular chief worked with USAID to get a needs assessment conducted at the GRO by a USAID contractor. The Consular Chief is now working with USAID to obtain a new dry seal machine and die for the GRO. However, even with a new dry seal, forgers will retain the ability to create perfect birth/marriage certificates backdated to 2004-2007.

¶8. (U) Post has completely reconfigured the panel physician program and will be working with the panel physicians to ensure that DNA samples continue to be secure. ConOffs have also begun requiring chain of custody documents to be included with DNA results. Post receives many cases in which DHS required DNA testing prior to approval of the petition; Post will review chain of custody documents in these cases as well. Post has also begun requesting additional evidence of relationship in visa categories founded on a

blood relationship. Post already requires significant evidence of relationship in marital cases, but a legitimate marital relationship does not necessarily mean it is a legal one.

Recommendations for CA Action

¶9. (SBU) Given the vulnerability of Guyanese civil documents and the extreme level of fraud in Guyana, Post recommends CA alter the Guyana entry in the Visa Reciprocity and Country Documents schedule to note that Birth and Marriage Certificates are "Available, but unreliable. Guyanese birth and marriage certificates must be submitted with an immigrant visa petition/application, but will not be accepted as primary evidence of relationship." Petitioners needing to establish evidence of blood relationship should be required to provide substitute documentation and/or additional secondary evidence of relationship which may include results of DNA testing along with chain of custody documentation.

¶10. (SBU) Given concerns about the DNA testing process, Post recommends CA consult with the AABB regarding standards for accreditation of DNA testing laboratories. Those requirements should include sufficient safeguards to ensure the identity of persons having samples taken in the U.S. for purposes of supporting a visa petition or application. If AABB standards are not sufficient, and cannot be made sufficient, Post recommends that CA and DHS work with the AABB to create separate standards for DNA testing for immigration purposes and/or allow high-fraud posts to limit acceptable DNA testing facilities to those that require the petitioner to have the sample drawn on-sight.

¶11. (U) These recommendations have full Front Office support.

ROBINSON